

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SSM-03
EB-08 /100 W

-----191201Z 117214 /10

R 181520Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5270
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3655

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR XF
SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL ON ASAD VISIT AND JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION

REF: DAMASCUS 1719

1. DURING CONVERSATION MARCH 17 WITH MFA SYRIA-LEBANON
DESK OFFICER, FIRST SECRETARY A.I. ZOTOV, EMBOFF ASKED
ABOUT PRESS REPORTS THAT ASAD WOULD VISIT MOSCOW FIRST
WEEK IN APRIL. ZOTOV ALL BUT CONFIRMED PLANS FOR A VISIT
(BY SAYING HE "COULD NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY"), BUT
INDICATED THAT FIRST WEEK IN APRIL WOULD BE TOO EARLY.
HE PUT "POSSIBLE" VISIT IN CONTEXT OF REGULAR HIGH-
LEVEL CONSULTATIONS, E.G., RECENT VISITS OF QADHAFI
AND SADAM HUSSEIN, BUT HE ALSO MENTIONED POLICY DIFFER-
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ENCES BETWEEN SOVIET UNION AND SYRIA OVER LEBANON WHICH
NEEDED TO BE DISCUSSED. IN THIS REGARD HE DESCRIBED
OPPOSITION WITHIN SYRIA TO LEBANESE INVOLVEMENT AS
WELL AS COST TO SYRIA OF INTERVENTION AN RESULTANT
DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SYRIAN ECONOMY.

2. ZOTOV SPECULATED ON POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF

JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION. CITING TACIT AGREEMENT BETWEEN PREVIOUSLY WARRING FACTIONS TO AVOID ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON LEADERS THEMSELVES, HE SAID HE NOW FEARED A REVENGE SEEKING VENDETTA WHICH COULD ONLY SERVE TO INCREASE TENSION IN LEBANON. WHILE HIS IMMEDIATE THOUGHT WAS TO SEEK FOR JUMBLATT'S ENEMIES AMONG THE CHRISTIAN-MARONITE GROUPS, HE ADDED THAT TEL AVI ALSO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM JUMBLATT'S REMOVAL AND INCREASED INSTABILITY IN LEBANON. COMMENT. ZOTOV'S PASSING COMMENT ON POSSIBLE ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT IN JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN REFLECTED AND AMPLIFIED IN SOVIET PRESS. V. BORISOV IN MARCH 17 IZVESTIYA AND PAVEL DEMCHENKO IN MARCH 18 PRAVDA STRONGLY HINT AT ISRAELI ROLE BY STRESSING ALLEGED BENEFITS ISRAEL WOULD GAIN AS A RESULT OF THIS MURDER. TOON

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